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# Roslindale

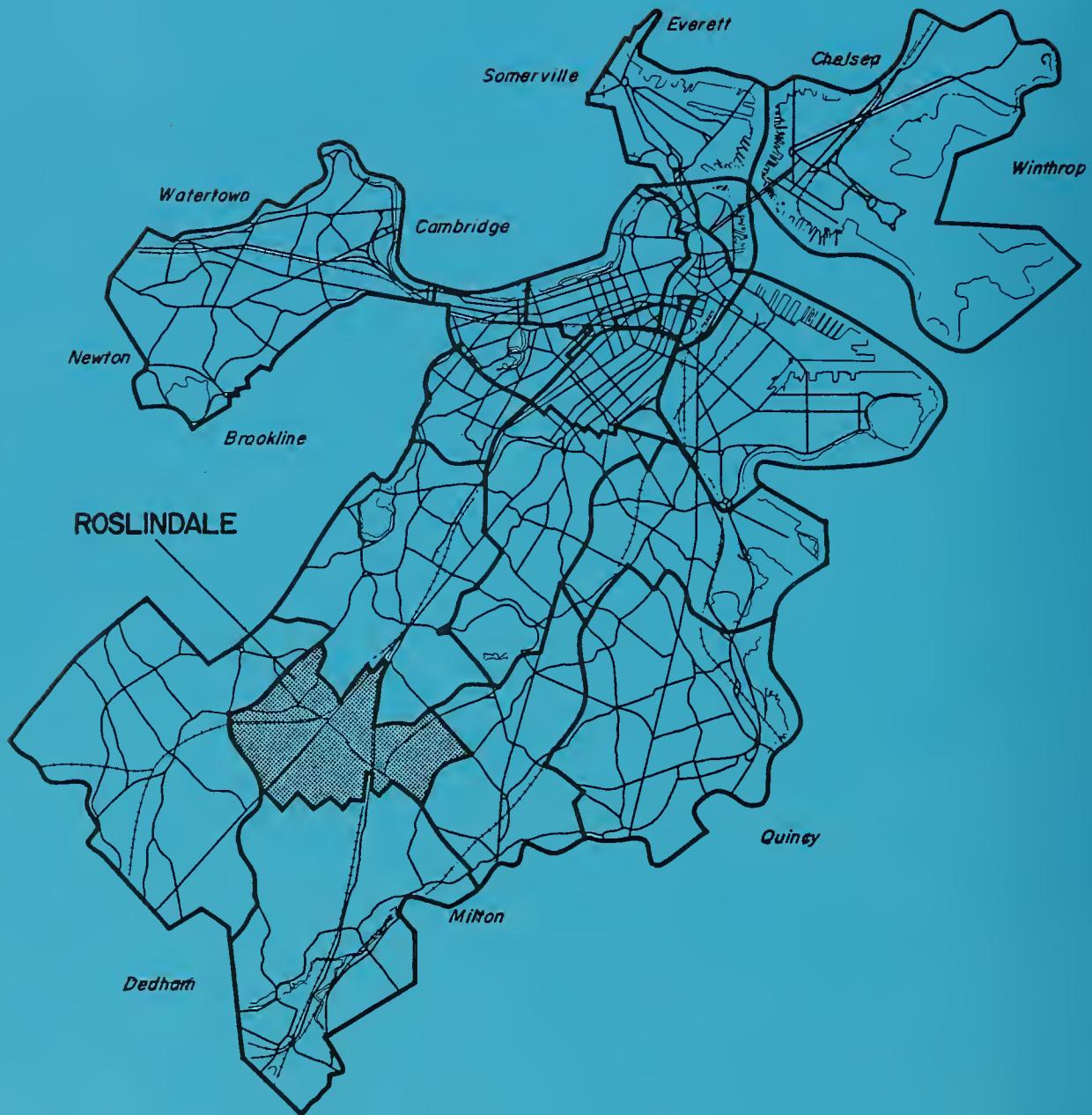
District Profile &  
Proposed 1978-1980

Neighborhood  
Improvement  
Program

City of Boston  
Kevin H. White, Mayor

Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Neighborhood Planning Program

Summer, 1977





CITY OF BOSTON  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY HALL, BOSTON

KEVIN H. WHITE  
MAYOR

The Boston Redevelopment Authority's Neighborhood Planning Program has prepared this report to assist residents and City agencies develop longer range solutions to community-wide planning issues.

This "Neighborhood Profile" contains information which helps bring into sharp focus those matters which are of concern to residents of each neighborhood in the City. This information facilitates public understanding and assists all of us--both at City Hall and in the neighborhood--in determining how we can best use the resources available to us.

I hope this booklet serves as an important building block to encourage greater interest in the problems confronting this neighborhood and our City and help us all in developing solutions to these problems.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin H. White".  
Kevin H. White  
Mayor

# Boston Redevelopment Authority

Robert F. Walsh / Director

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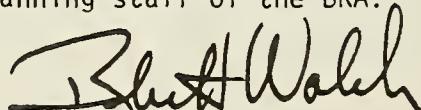
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The Boston Redevelopment Authority, as the City planning agency, is pleased to submit for neighborhood review a profile of Roslindale.

It is my hope that the profile can serve as a starting point in the dialogue that should and must take place between neighborhood residents and public officials as decisions are made about the use of community development funds and other matters of public policy.

The decision-making process, of course, must be based on data that is up-to-date and accurate. I am confident that the material contained in this report can be of great assistance to all who care about this neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole.

Questions and comments about the material in the report should be directed to the Neighborhood Planning staff of the BRA.



Robert F. Walsh  
Director  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

This planning report, prepared by the Roslindale Neighborhood Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials in defining the needs of and programs for Roslindale. It is also written to assist prospective residents and investors who may wish further information about the community.

The report includes background information, a discussion of major community planning and development issues and recommended strategies and is intended to aid in the establishment of a long-range framework for decision making by the public and private sectors.



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# 1.

## BACKGROUND

### A. SHORT HISTORY

1

Before annexation to the City in 1873, Roslindale was part of West Roxbury and the Town of Roxbury. During the next three decades Roslindale underwent its greatest surge of development. The district gained enough people to be considered a community in itself although a part of West Roxbury.

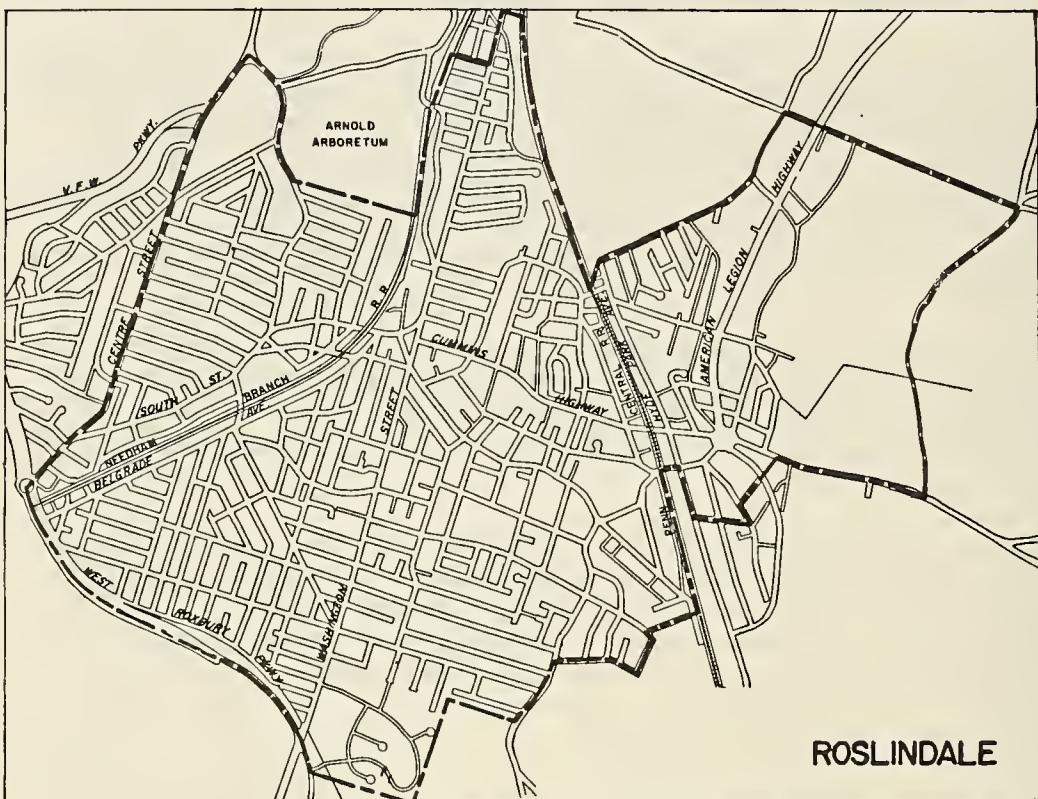
The Dedham Post Road, now called Centre Street was the main avenue of commerce from Boston outward. Nathan Hale, Benedict Arnold and George Washington traveled this road. George Washington selected Weld Hill, in what is now called Arnold Arboretum - as a battle line in the siege of Boston. Washington Street, now the main thoroughfare, was not built until 1804. It was then called Dedham Turnpike and ended in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

The two railroads which trisect the district were extended to Roslindale during the 1870's. The New Haven Railroad's Washington Street Station opened in 1878. Boston's Street Railway System was extended south during this period from Forest Hills into the district.

Roslindale was principally a rural area until the turn of the century, sparsely populated with large farms and small supportive businesses. The huge Weld Farm, between Centre and South Streets and the west side of Church Street passed from the hands of Captain John Weld in 1806 to Benjamin Bussey who built a mansion in 1818, and lived there until 1842. He bequeathed it to Harvard and it is now part of the Arnold Arboretum. Harvard left the land untouched until 1872 when it took advantage of a cash bequest from James Arnold to set up a professorship of tree culture in conjunction with the Bussey land. The advent of public transportation to Roslindale in the late 1800's brought many people who were seeking a new way of life in a beautiful surrounding. Real estate brokers called Roslindale "a garden suburb" which it quickly became. Unlike the earlier old stock yankees, the newcomers who were to dominate the community up to the present were, for the most part, Boston born sons and daughters of immigrants and predominantly Catholic.

There has been considerable ethnic diversity as Irish immigrants, Italian, other European and also Eastern Mediterranean and Arabic nationalities have made their home in Roslindale. The newest ethnic group to purchase homes and open small businesses is Greek.

Today Washington Street is still the district's major thoroughfare. The original Roslindale Village along Washington Street has become Roslindale Square, the modern day heart of the district. Commercial establishments and banks are concentrated in the Square, as well as the Post Office and Library. The Municipal Building, which houses the Little City Hall and the Greater Roslindale Health Service, was constructed in 1918.



#### B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Located in the southwestern sector of the city and surrounded by West Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park and Mattapan, Roslindale is a residential neighborhood of unpretentious but well maintained houses.

Roslindale's individual identity historically has been problematic: politically, the district does not have separate representation, geographically, its boundaries are blurred with its neighboring communities, and accessibility is generally poor as major transportation networks circumvent many of Roslindale's neighborhoods. In spite of these factors, local residents have a strong sense of community pride and concern for its future.

The extreme condition of Roslindale Square, the district's commercial center, is of paramount concern to residents and business-

men alike. Long plagued by severe traffic congestion, the lack of convenient off-street parking and an inadequate mix of retail stores, the Square is more recently the scene of arson and vandalism.

In August, 1975, Corey's Market on Corinth Street suffered a major fire which caused extensive damage to the adjoining stores. The building has remained vacant and is a visible indication of the physical and economic condition of the Square.

Washington Street, which extends north and south of Roslindale Square, is lined with houses and small businesses. The district's two housing projects are also close to Washington Street. The Archdale Project, constructed in 1951, contains 287 dwelling units, many of which are in need of major repair and maintenance. The Washington-Beech Streets project, constructed in 1952, has 263 dwelling units which are in moderate condition. In this project, the buildings which front Washington Street are primarily reserved for elderly occupants.

In 1970, Roslindale's population was 32,911, representing a slight increase (4%) over 1960. Age patterns for Roslindale are similar to those in the City, although the district has a somewhat larger proportion of residents over 45 years old. Between 1960 and 1970 the proportion of age groups 0-4 and 25-64 declined, while age groups 5-24 and 65+ increased. Roslindale has a large portion of low income elderly residents with 13% below the poverty level. This was similar to city-wide trends.

In 1970, median family income was \$10,539, somewhat above the City's \$9,133 median.

In 1970, Roslindale had 12,253 housing units, mostly in 1-2 family structures. Over 88% of the total units were owner occupied, compared to 27% in the City. The district's housing stock is moderately old, younger than the more urban neighborhoods but older than the more suburban areas. More than 90% of the units were built before 1939.

Along the older arterial streets, such as Hyde Park Avenue, Washington Street, and Belgrade Avenue, the housing stock is primarily wood frame triple deckers in moderate to poor condition. For people unfamiliar with Roslindale, this is often the picture they see as they travel to West Roxbury, Dedham and other southern metropolitan suburbs.

Only a small number of Roslindale's housing units (7-10%) are in deteriorating or dilapidated condition, although within the Lower Washington area almost 40% of the structures surveyed by the Housing Inspection Department in 1973 required repairs between

\$1,000 to \$3,500 each to reach minimum code standards. A number of these units are located near the Southwest Corridor, where many houses were formerly owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and were originally taken for the construction of the Route I-95 extension, which was halted in 1972 by substantial community opposition.

The following is a discussion of Roslindale's sub-areas:

1. Mt. Hope

Located in the eastern portion of the district, Mt. Hope includes all of the district's cemeteries and a well maintained residential community. It is bounded by Cummins Highway, the Penn Central Mainline Railroad, Neponset Avenue, Walk Hill Street and Boston State Hospital. As a neighborhood this area is often considered part of Jamaica Plain and Mattapan rather than Roslindale.

In 1970, the population of Mt. Hope was 3121, an increase of 17% from 1960. Mt. Hope contains a growing elderly population.

Of the total 1,219 housing units counted in 1970, only 150 required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Slightly more than one half of the structures in Mt. Hope are owner-occupied.

The Roslindale Shopping Center along American Legion Highway and the Bradlee/Stop & Shop Center, a more modern center, at American Legion and Cummins Highways serve the commercial needs of the Mt. Hope area. The former has been allowed to deteriorate substantially as a result of ineffective management, inadequate maintenance and demolition resulting from fires. These centers also attract a large proportion of shoppers from Dorchester, Mattapan and Hyde Park which further tends to weaken the identity of Mount Hope as part of Roslindale.

2. Lower Washington

Located in the central portion of Roslindale, the Lower Washington sub-area is bounded by the Penn Central tracks, the Arnold Arboretum, Washington Street, and Cummins Highway. In 1970, Lower Washington had a population of 7480, down 15% from 1960, primarily because of land taking in the Southwest Corridor right-of-way and some housing abandonment and demolition in the vicinity of the Archdale public housing project and along Washington Street. This area along Washington Street also contains some marginal commercial establishments.

3. Centre-South

5

Centre-South is one of the more affluent areas of the City with a 1970 median family income of \$12,000 and a population of 6,570, up 4% from 1960. It is bounded by Centre Street, the Needham Branch Railroad, Roslindale Square, a portion of Washington Street, and West Roxbury.

Centre-South is one of the oldest sections of Roslindale. It contains a number of fine large homes and a blend of post World War II housing which is generally very well maintained.

Centre-South's population composition shows an older population with a higher proportion over 60 (26%) than the City. Of the 1995 housing units counted in 1970, only 70 required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most structures in Centre-South are owner occupied.

Roslindale Square, on the eastern edge of this area, is plagued by problems associated with older neighborhood centers including traffic congestion, inadequate parking and the disappearance of retail establishments and chain stores. Within the past year, the Square's largest retailer, Allen Furniture, relocated to Needham Heights and sold the premises to the Greek Orthodox Church to be used as a church and religious school by the growing Roslindale/West Roxbury Greek parishioners. After five months of reconstruction by dedicated parishioners, only a month from completion, a major fire of suspicious origin occurred which caused extensive damage. Reconstruction will be costly but the Greek community intends to go ahead with its initial occupancy plans.

During the past year the City has been working with Ryan Elliott and the Roslindale Association for Community Development (RACD) to devise a revitalization program for Roslindale Square. The preliminary results of this work will be forthcoming shortly.

4. Metropolitan Hill - Beech

Located in the southern portion of Roslindale, the Metropolitan Hill-Beech area is bounded by the Needham Branch Railroad, Cummins Highway, West Roxbury Parkway and Hyde Park. In 1970, Metropolitan Hill-Beech had a population of 15,740, up 10% from 1960, due primarily to the construction of High Point Village's 540 units in the late 1960's and scattered single family new construction.

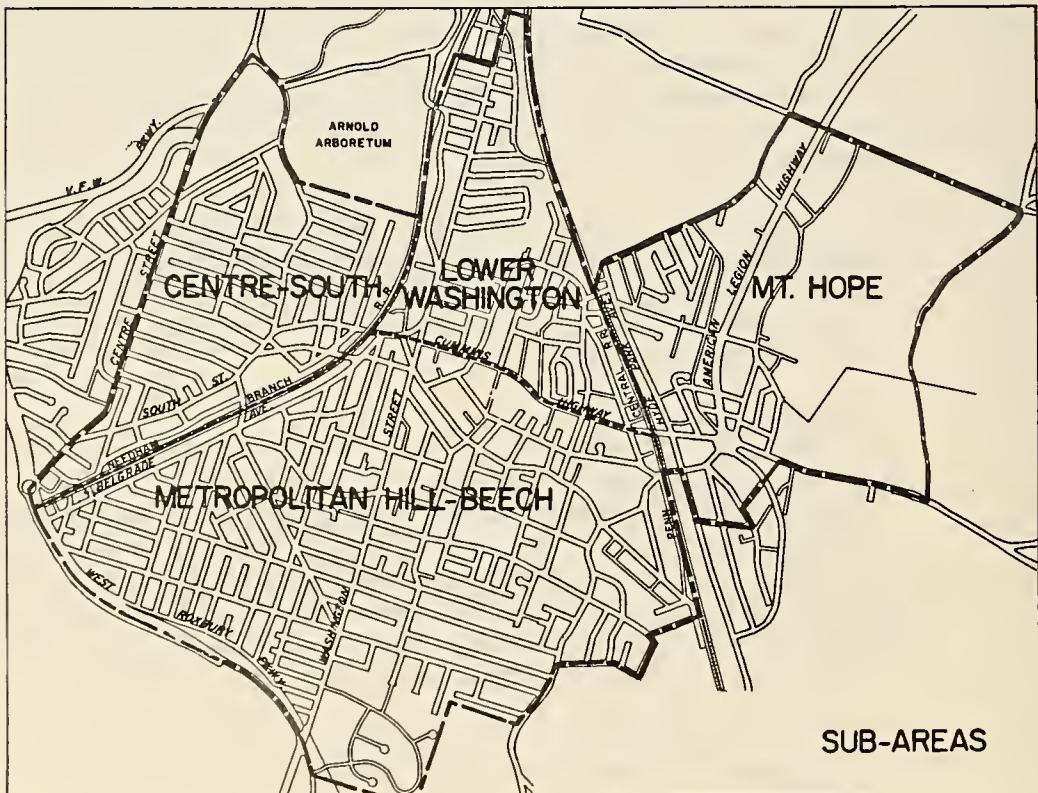
In 1970, 5525 dwelling units were counted in Metropolitan Hill-Beech, of which 410 (7%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. 91% of the units in this area are owner-occupied.

In 1970, there were 1740 dwelling units in Lower Washington. Based on a 1973 survey of all units within this area, approximately 40% of the units needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. This is particularly unusual considering the high owner occupancy rate (86%) in this area.

The proposed construction of I-95 and subsequent land takings along with the abandonment of White City and deterioration of Pagel Playground were major factors in the general decline of this section. Within the past year the Massachusetts Department of Public Works has intensified its efforts to resell its residential and commercial properties to private owners. In addition, at the request of local residents, the Weld School was advertised for rehabilitation; E. Dennis Walsh has been designated as developer for the property and plans to convert it into 14 low-income elderly apartments.

In recognizing that restoration of many former state-owned properties would require extensive renovations, the City of Boston has designated a portion of Lower Washington eligible for HUD Section 312 loans to assist homeowners in defraying the cost of rehabilitation. \$250,000 has been committed to this area since the program's inception in May, 1977.

The upper Washington Street strip commercial stores and Roslindale Square's stores generally serve this area.



Roslindale Square and the High Point Village shopping center serve this area along with the Stop & Shop American Legion Center. Many residents also travel to West Roxbury and Dedham on a weekly basis for shopping purposes.

The district is characterized primarily by its hilly, steep terrain, narrow streets and well maintained single and two family houses. The area, once strongly family oriented is now comprised of a growing number of single person elderly homeowners.

Increased traffic volume and speed by drivers who use this district's narrow one-way streets as pass through routes to Dedham, Mattapan and the South Shore have caused considerable concern among local residents. Within the past two years, traffic accidents at key intersections have increased as have pedestrian injuries resulting from increased traffic on local streets.

#### Comparative Statistics - Roslindale

##### 1970 U.S. Census Data

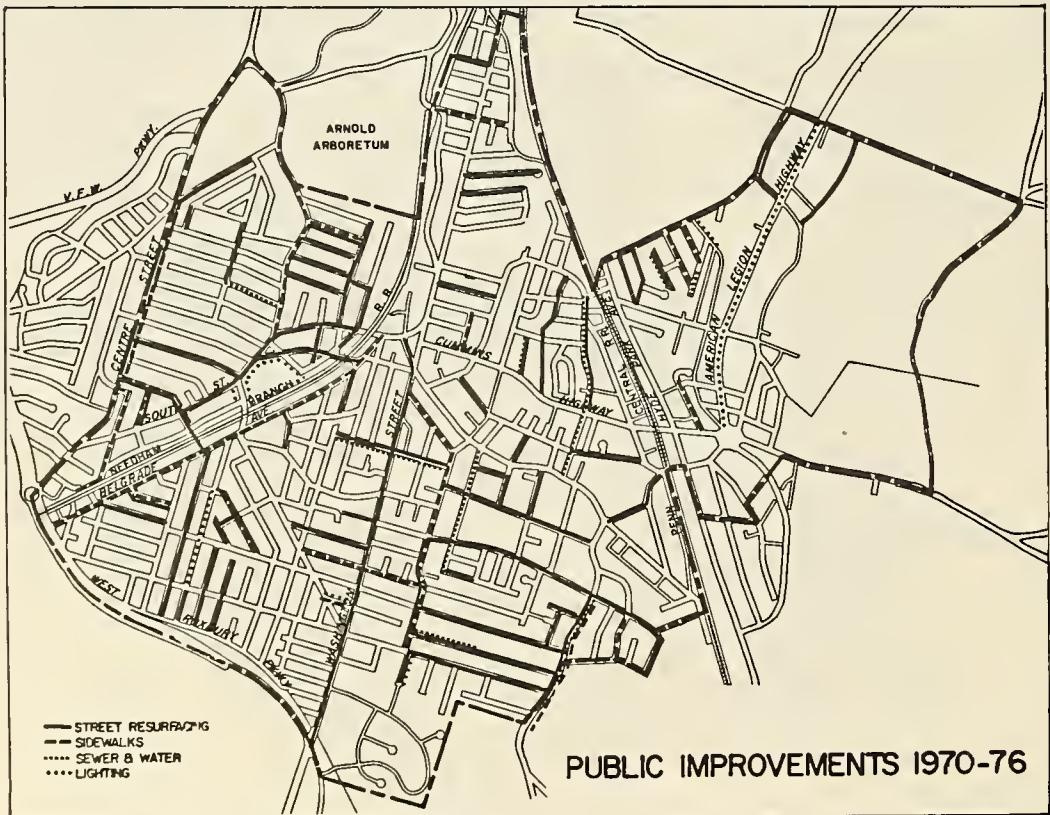
Population	Mt. Hope	Lower Washington	Centre-South	Metropolitan Hill-Beech	Roslindale DISTRICT	CITY
Total 1970 Change from '60	3,269 +18%	7,480 -15%	6,570 +4%	15,740 +10%	32,911 +4%	639,803 -8%
Aged 15-19 yrs.-1970 Change from '60	224 +18%	493 +21%	574 -30%	1,352 +21%	2,643 +8%	60,900 17%
Aged 20-24 yrs.-1970 Change from '60	312 +38%	371 +4%	465 -14%	1,160 +26%	2,308 +14%	76,958 41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over-1970 Change from '60	579 +41%	751 -5%	1,413 0%	2,010 +14%	4,630 +13%	81,437 -5%
<hr/>						
<u>Income</u>						
Median Family	NA	\$ 9,300- 10,100	\$12,000	\$10,100- 11,000	\$10,539	\$ 9,133
% Families under \$5,000	NA	16%	6%	12%	NA	22%
<hr/>						
<u>Housing</u>						
Total Dwelling Units	1,219	1,740	1,995	5,525	10,479	232,401
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	. 150	600	70	410	1,220	67,102
Owner-Occupied Units	51%	86%	95%	91%	88%	27%
Mobility of Residents: People in same house over 5 years-1970	48%	65%	68%	65%	65%	50%

NA = Not Available

## C. PAST MAJOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT (1968-1976)

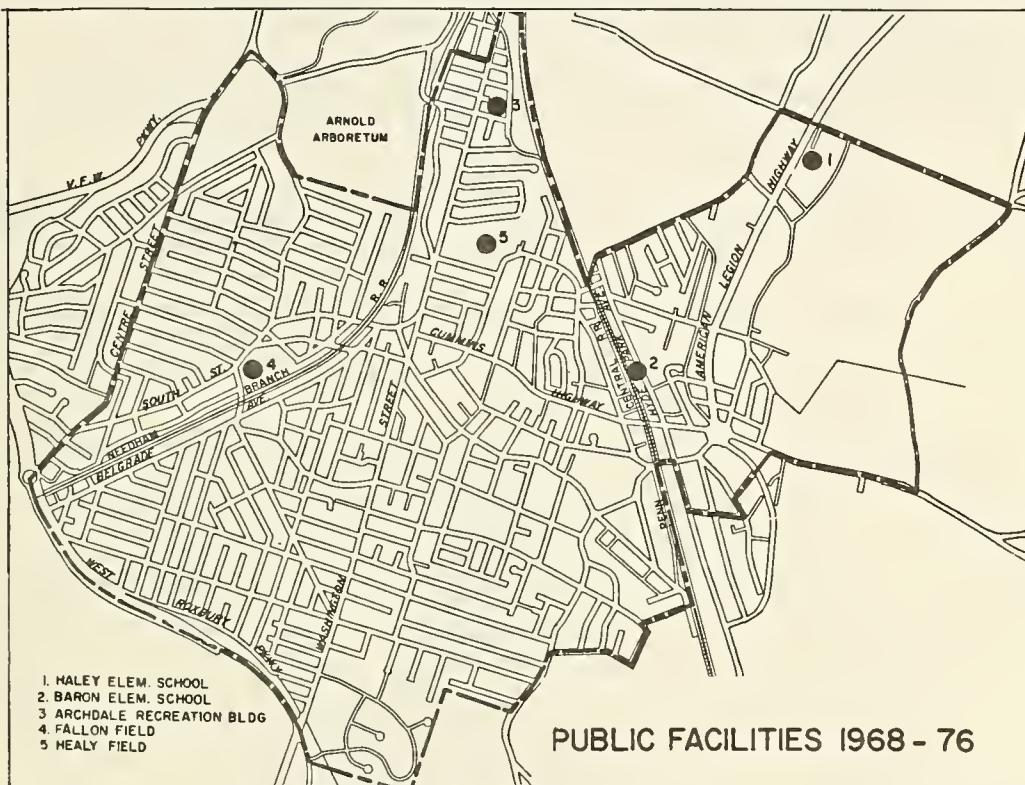
Since 1968, the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening Roslindale's neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, the reconstruction of streets and the replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$870,500 on rehabilitation for the Haley Elementary School, \$510,233 for the Jennie L. Barron Elementary School, \$299,000 for the Archdale Recreation Building, and \$720,000 for the pool at Healy Field. During this period, three parks were also improved: (1) Fallon Field received \$200,000; (2) Healy Field-\$220,000; and (3) Parkman Playground-\$84,000. (See Public Facilities map). At the same time, many streets were reconstructed or resurfaced, 6 streets had water and sewer line improvements, while new sidewalks and new lighting were installed on selected streets in the district and one footway was reconstructed.

Sodium vapor lighting was installed in Roslindale Square at a cost of \$92,300. Rehabilitation of the Municipal Building for use as a health center was begun in 1975. Approximately 1,400 homeowners have participated in the Housing Improvement Program which offers a 20% rebate for certain repairs to owner occupants of 1-6 unit structures. As of August, 1977, \$150,000 was incumbered for home improvements in Roslindale under the 312 loan program.



Improvements were made to Adams Park (\$36,400) and the Taft Hill Parking lot was reconstructed (\$120,000) and a new parking lot on the former Rialto Theater site (\$195,000). Under Boston 200's Visible Improvement Project, a walkway, benches and trees were installed on the Cummins Highway entrance to the Municipal Building (\$7,500). A consultant contract was awarded to Ryan Elliott/Charles Hilgenhurst for development of a revitalization program for Roslindale Square. This contract is nearing its completion.

The 119 unit Cliffmont Street Elderly Housing Development was opened in June, 1977 by the Boston Housing Authority.



#### D. 1977 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1977 public investment program concentrates in three areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, and capital improvements.

##### 1. Housing

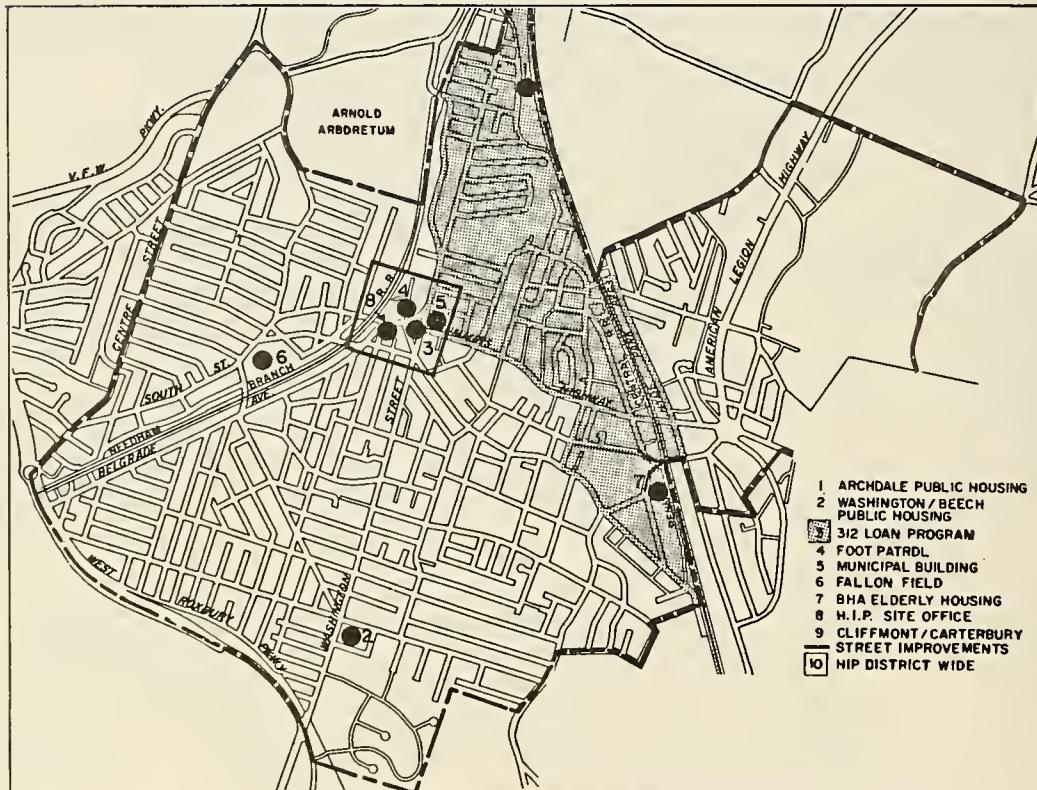
The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied structures, will be available throughout Roslindale and has funds for the rehabilitation of approximately 300 buildings (\$250,000). 50% rebates will be available to homeowners over 65 years of age.

The Washington/Beech Street Public Housing will receive \$300,000 for repairs to the boiler, major electrical work, and recreational site improvements. Security screens for the elderly units are also included under this funding. \$231,000 is budgeted for security screens and exterior improvements at Archdale Housing Project, and \$40,000 for renovation of the two existing basketball courts within the Archdale project.

## 2. Commercial Area Revitalization

The city's effort toward commercial area revitalization includes a number of improvements to Roslindale Square:

- a. A consultant contract to develop a marketing, administrative and financial program to implement a Revitalization Program for Roslindale Square (\$50,000)
- b. Rehabilitation of a portion of the Municipal Building for use as a neighborhood health center (\$180,000);
- c. Continuation of foot patrol program in the Square (\$52,750);
- d. Business district amenities to include trees, benches and trash receptacles (\$10,000);



- e. The Teen Center will receive a matching grant of \$20,000; and
- f. RESTORE Program which offers a 20% rebate for storefront improvements (\$20,000).

3. Capital Improvements

The City's capital improvement program includes renovation at Fallon Field for fencing, lighting and reconstruction of basketball and tennis courts (\$145,000). Traffic signals for the intersection of Cliffmont and Canterbury Streets to complement the construction of elderly housing. Sidewalk and street improvements district-wide are also budgeted (\$158,000).

## **2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (Mid and Long-Range)**

A. CHANGES IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE

Issues

Roslindale Square, at the crossroads of the southwestern part of the City, has shown signs of decline during the past decade. Increasing traffic congestion, the lack of convenient off-street parking, and retail store turnovers to less desirable uses are the major problems of the Square. Building and lot sizes contribute to obsolescence and inefficiency in the Square along with the confusing, often nonexistent relationship between owners of buildings and the retail tenants. Over the years, property has not been adequately maintained and faulty store management has contributed to the Square's decline. In addition, the right-of-way of the Needham Branch (Penn Central) Railroad continues to be an unattractive feature in the Square with a poorly maintained parking lot and accessory buildings in poor condition. Vandalism and store window breaks have also been a constant problem in the Square, although recent efforts by police footpatrolmen have led to a decline in vandalism.

Because of these reasons, Roslindale Square has been unable to attract shoppers and has lost business to many of the outlying shopping centers such as Dedham Mall, American Legion Highway Center and West Roxbury.

Recent changes which hopefully will result in an upswing in the Square have been noted. The City of Boston has completed construction of an 80-car parking facility with new lighting on Taft Hill and the Rialto Theater has been demolished and replaced by a needed off-street parking lot.

A consultant contract for revitalization of the Square was awarded to Ryan-Elliott/Charles Hilgenhurst to explore the potential for attracting new development in the Square in addition to increasing the drawing capacity of existing businesses. This consultant team has assembled a marketing, financial and administrative program to implement the realization of these goals which will be released to the community for its review shortly. The Roslindale Association for Community Development was instrumental in initiating this program and worked closely with the consultant and city staff throughout the contract performance. Importantly, the Roslindale Board of Trade has been reorganized and is now meeting on a regular basis to direct their concerted energies on the problems in the Square.

#### Strategies

In 1976-77, City staff worked closely with the Ryan-Elliott/Hilgenhurst team in analyzing the capacity of Roslindale to attract new development and improve the level of existing business activity in the Square. Particular attention was given to alleviating traffic congestion and increasing the overall attractiveness of the Square to shoppers through recommendations for storefront renovation, the elimination of billboards and improved marketing and promotional techniques.

The preliminary findings indicate a definite need to commit Community Development Block Grant funding for the redesign of South Street between Washington Street and Belgrade Avenue. Additional transportation changes will likely be necessary to effect this widening and should be included in the general scope of the design/engineering contract. Detailed examination of transportation options should be presented to the community for review prior to any decision on construction activity.

In the event that land takings are necessary to effect transportation improvements, business relocation assistance will be made available to all businesses affected. Efforts will be made to retain current levels of business activity throughout the construction period whenever possible.

Many of the recommendations contained in the preliminary report can only be achieved with the cooperation of a strong, well functioning local development corporation. Community initiative will be needed to achieve successful revitalization. The City of Boston, through its Community Development Program should commit funds toward reducing the required local share needed to obtain matching grants and loans.

Intensive efforts are needed to coordinate all financing programs, i.e., SBA, CDBG, private resources, so that available resources can have maximum impact.

The City, through the Business District Amenities Program, will install street trees, benches and trash receptacles at selected locations in the Square to enhance its attractiveness.

The Boston Police Department, through the federally funded foot-patrol program and the monthly community relations meetings, will continue to deal with problems of vandalism and teenage disorder in the Square which have been reduced recently through these effective programs. The continued cooperation of residents and merchants in alerting the police to suspicious conditions will increase their rate of success in combatting these urban problems.

It is recommended that the City institute its Storefront Improvement Program (Restore) which offers an incentive of cash rebates for improvements in Roslindale.

B. SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR

Issues

The proposed construction in 1964 of the Southwest link of I-95 did much to destroy a once stable neighborhood. Land takings along the Penn Central line by the State Department of Public Works (DPW) have produced tracts of vacant land where houses were demolished to provide right-of-way for the road which was cancelled in 1972. In the interim homeowners reacted by (1) selling quickly and often at a market loss on the private market, (2) deferring regular maintenance and renovation until the future was clear and (3) eagerly selling to DPW to liquidate their houses, leaving abandoned homes which were then boarded and occasionally demolished.

Public facilities, such as Cardillo Playground, Pagel Playground, the Weld School and the Cummins Highway/Canterbury Street bridges were allowed to deteriorate extensively. Vandalism is now common in the immediate vicinity and the accumulation of debris is unsightly. Neighborhood confidence and pride has been severely shaken.

In June, 1977, construction was completed of a 119 unit BHA elderly housing development on Cliffmont Street. This represents the first effort to return this land to community uses. Individual parcels have been sold in the past year to private owners who have agreed to rehabilitate the properties. The remaining corridor land should be re-used to meet Roslindale's needs on a priority basis.

The 312 Loan Program which offers a 3% interest rate for home improvements has been made available to this area on a limited basis since May, 1977.

The vacant Weld School and its adjacent attached playground has been extensively vandalized and its existence serves only to provide the local youth a place to drink and aggravate residents with their noise, etc. Local residents requested that plans be developed to rehabilitate this school for elderly housing. A developer has been designated by the D.P.W. pending ability to obtain construction financing and rental subsidy.

### Strategies

The scarcity of local recreational facilities in the Southwest Corridor area must be addressed. The MDC should be encouraged to relocate Cardillo Playground to 457-485 Hyde Park Avenue which is vacant, adjacent to the Barron School and owned by the Department of Public Works . Since MDC may not be anxious to continue providing neighborhood parks, the City should consider developing this new facility. The present site at Blakemore St./ Hyde Park Avenue should be stripped of its scrap play equipment and a commercial re-use considered.

Pagel Playground, an existing eyesore in this community, had been scheduled for improvements which have been postponed due to uncertainty of financing new housing on the White City site. Section 8 subsidies are now assured for the development of a 75 unit elderly complex here. Tennis facilities on this site could be reconstructed and expanded to include additional courts.

E. Dennis Walsh, developer for the Weld School, has received Section 8 commitment for 14 elderly units, and received Board of Appeal approval for variance from zoning regulations. Construction should begin in early Spring, 1978. Extensive police, DPW and community cooperation will be needed in the winter months as local vandals are competing to destroy the building.

\$150,000 for the 312 Loan Program was made available during the past six months for this Southwest Corridor area. The initial success in spending this money indicates the need for additional funding. In many instances, because of prolonged abandonment, many homes now require between \$4,000 and \$10,000 in repairs to major plumbing, heating and electrical systems in addition to exterior renovations. Without the availability of low interest home improvement money, and because of the reluctance of the banking community to lend conventional financing for such questionable structures, neighborhood stabilization cannot be achieved.

The DPW/MBTA should be encouraged to undertake major renovations to the bridges over the Penn Central on Cummins Highway, Canterbury Street and Blakemore Street.

Issues

The City's Home Improvement Program (HIP) has been heavily subscribed to by residents of Roslindale. Over 1,400 owners have applied for the program. The 1977 HIP offers a 50% rebate to elderly homeowners. In order to achieve a participation rate of 30% of eligible structures, this program should be continued.

Aside from homes in the Southwest Corridor, the housing stock is in good condition. The triple deckers on the major arterial streets are in need of repair, however, and 12% of the houses in the Lower Washington district need major rehabilitation.

The Archdale Housing Project is in need of major interior and exterior improvements. The heavily vandalized recreation building should be torn down or a viable alternative use found in the very near future. Outdoor recreational sites which are deteriorated should be reconstructed.

The Washington/Beech Street Public Housing is also in need of renovation and grass should replace concrete and blacktop areas in portions of the courtyards to provide a passive recreation area for the elderly residents. The individual apartments need general renovation to bathrooms and kitchens.

The key to the future of Roslindale's housing stock lies in its ability to attract young families to the community where transportation, commercial, recreation and cultural opportunities are oriented toward family needs. Much of Roslindale's population is elderly and the district appears to be losing young families to the suburbs. The current housing stock is ideally suited to both the taste and pocketbook of new homeowners, who are looking for the charm of architectural features of older homes within affordable price levels and in attractive settings. Pride in ownership is evident throughout Roslindale and should be promoted to attract potential investors to consider locating here.

Strategies

Continuation of the Home Improvement Program (20% and 50% elderly rebate program) is essential for the rehabilitation and constant upkeep of Roslindale's housing stock particularly with the threat of tax increases looming and inflation continuing. It is recommended that Lower Washington Street and the Southwest Corridor section be targeted for additional 312 loan programs.

In the past years, modernization funds have been committed to the BHA for needed improvements at the Archdale and Washington/

Beech projects, however, to date few funds have actually been spent on these long needed improvements. The BHA contends that staff and budget limitations impair their ability to perform needed work. If such is the case, sufficient allocation for administrative expenses to insure implementation programs is of utmost importance if these projects are to be salvaged. Recent BHA administrative changes are a step forward.

The City should develop a promotional brochure and/or poster which demonstrates the attractive features of Roslindale for unfamiliar potential investors. This will also help to stimulate community self pride and to stem the outflow of present young families to the suburbs. In addition, the City should conduct a seminar with local real estate brokers and mortgage lending institutions to heighten their awareness of the assets of Roslindale's housing stock and to begin a realistic approach to actively attract new investors to Roslindale. Community Development funds should be reserved for this purpose.

D. ELDERLY HOUSING

Issues

The housing needs of the elderly have generally been neglected over the years in Roslindale. Aged persons continue to pay a disproportionately high percentage of their fixed incomes for shelter, with a concomitant curtailment of expenditures for other essentials - including food, health care, clothing, transportation, etc. Elders are also living in physically inadequate dwellings and in undesirable environments such as in high crime areas, adjacent to nuisances (noise and air pollution) and distant from transit, shopping and community facilities.

In 1970, 15.3% of Roslindale's population was over 65 years compared to 12.8% in the City as a whole. The waiting list for Boston Housing Authority (BHA) elderly units is very long and it may take 2-3 years before someone on that list is placed in one of the City's housing developments. Up to June, 1977, Roslindale did not have an exclusive BHA project for the elderly although a section of the Washington-Beech Project has been traditionally occupied by elderly tenants. Roslindale's senior citizens currently place their names on waiting lists for BHA projects for the elderly in Hyde Park, West Roxbury and other districts.

In June, 1977, the Boston Housing Authority opened 119 units of elderly housing along Cliffmont Street in the Southwest Corridor. Also, in 1975, the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency financed the conversion of 1 Conway Street to 28 elderly units.

Strategy

In subsequent years other sites should be considered for elderly housing because of the district's growing number of elders. Sites

should be pursued near Roslindale Square to help in its revitalization program. The conversion of the Weld School into 14 elderly apartment units will proceed in the Spring, 1978.

#### E. NEED FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS & PUBLIC FACILITIES

##### Issues

Many of Roslindale's parks, streets and utilities are in need of replacement or repair. Specific park and recreation issues include the lack of a tot lot and playground area at the Washington-Beech Public Housing project and the need for fencing around the basketball court at Healy Field. Existing recreation facilities for the immediate Archdale Project residents are inadequate for current needs.

##### Strategies

Boston Redevelopment Authority projections indicate that Roslindale's population will remain stable at 40,000 people over the next decade. To insure this stability improvements are necessary to the district's parks, schools, streets, and water lines.

There are several parcels of vacant land along Washington Street which could be developed into recreation sites. These parcels are located at 3849 and 4040 Washington Street. Possible uses include tot lot/sitting area and basketball court, respectively.

The Roslindale district has been the recent recipient of large capital expenditures for its local playgrounds. It has become increasingly apparent that the continued expenditure of capital funds for parks and recreation sites in this district will be largely wasted unless adequate and regular maintenance is increased so that minor repairs do not become capital expenditures or eyesores in the short term causing neighborhood decline and loss of community pride.

#### F. TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT: NEEDHAM BRANCH

##### Issues

Roslindale is located close to the end of the City's mass transit network, with connections to Forest Hills MBTA Station by bus service only. The proposed extension of the Orange Line along the Needham Branch Railroad from Forest Hills has been warmly accepted by most residents in Roslindale although there has been considerable discussion of the type of service (i.e., rapid transit v.s. upgraded commuter line) and the location of stations within Roslindale.

The reconstruction of the Orange Line from Forest Hills to South Cove is expected to begin late in 1978 and extend through 1982.

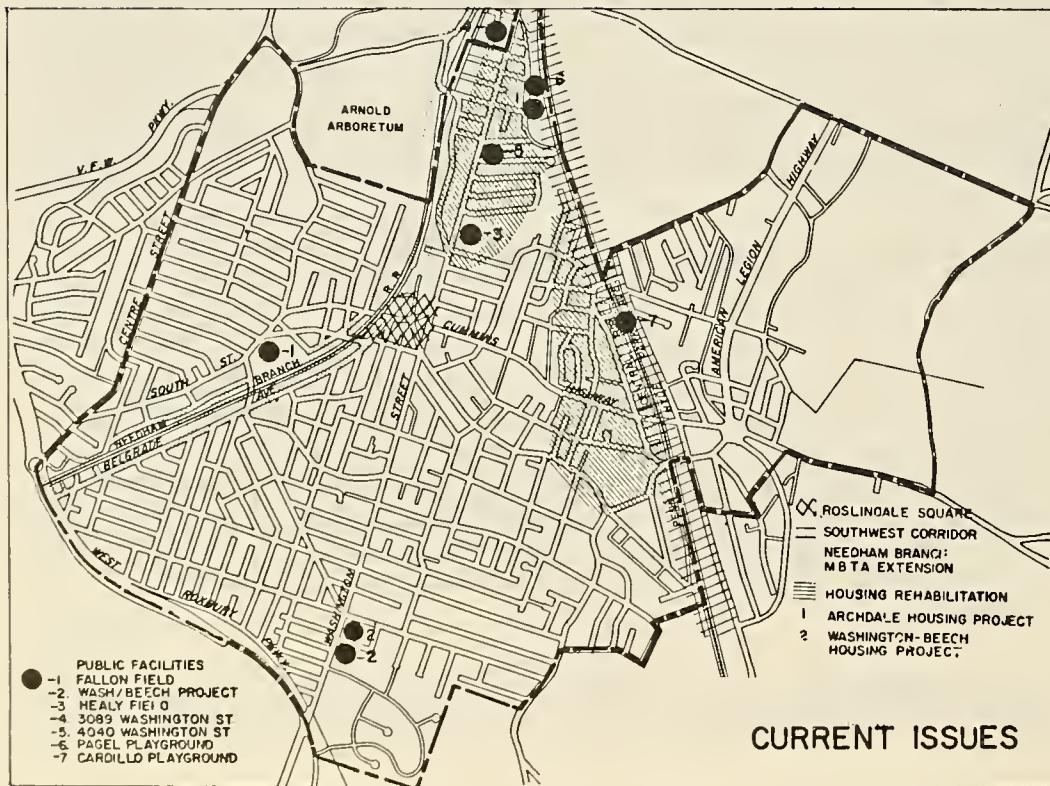
During this period, commuter rails on the Needham Branch will be terminated and alternative bus service substituted. During this expected shutdown, station reconstruction in Roslindale for commuter rail will be undertaken.

Recommendations from Ryan Elliott's Revitalization Program for Roslindale Square suggest a joint development at this station between the MBTA and a local development corporation so that the goals of commercial revitalization and improved transportation service can be successfully integrated.

### Strategies

The City, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Southwest Development Coordinator are working closely with local groups as well as with the MBTA and its consultants on the final determination of the type of service and station locations for the proposed extension line. The BRA expects to be working closely with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) on joint development studies at the various station stops in both Roslindale and West Roxbury.

The firm of C.E. Maguire & Associates has been preparing for the MBTA an Environmental Impact Statement for the extension of rapid transit from Forest Hills through Roslindale and West Roxbury to Route 128 in Needham. This report has been delayed because of controversy in the Town of Needham over the terminal point of the rapid transit line. An agreement has been tentatively reached between the Town and the MBTA and the final document will be forthcoming.



# **3.**

## **PROPOSED THREE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978-1980) AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND OBJECTIVES**

19

The proposed Neighborhood Improvement Program for Roslindale must take into consideration the tightening fiscal situation which Boston and other older urban centers face. The escalating costs of capital construction, education, and the increased demand for city services from residents, business and tourists pose serious constraints on spending the limited resources available to the city through its property taxes, bond capacity, state aid and federal revenue sharing. Decisions in regard to individual neighborhood expenditures must reflect realistic funding levels and staffing capacities.

Roslindale's allocation from the City's revenue sharing funds for 1975 through 1977 totals approximately \$2,750,000. A reasonably comparable amount should be made available in 1978 through 1980. This money should be spent in addressing Roslindale's long term issues of residential stability and commercial center revitalization which are crucial to the overall identifications of Roslindale as an attractive, viable community. Accordingly, systematic improvements to recreation areas, streets, and utility systems throughout the district will continue to be necessary. Human service programs will become increasingly important for elderly, teenage and lower income residents and should receive adequate funding.

The proposed 1978-1980 Neighborhood Improvement Program, by strengthening neighborhood confidence and achieving residential stability, will hopefully encourage private investment in the district's housing stock and commercial center. In this way, the effects of limited funds can be maximized through the expenditure of the private sector and Roslindale's long term goals achieved.

The following is the 1978-1980 proposed Neighborhood Improvement Program for Roslindale.

### **A. RESIDENTIAL STABILITY**

1. The City's Housing Improvement Program has been extremely effective in encouraging homeowners to make needed repairs to their home through its 20% rebate incentive. Over 1,400 buildings in Roslindale are being renovated under this program or approximately 21% of the eligible, owner-occupied structures in Roslindale. It is necessary to extend this program so that a larger percentage of the housing stock can be renovated to maintain the overall quality of housing in Roslindale and increase pride in the neighborhood. The area immediately surrounding the Southwest Corridor and Lower Washington Street should be heavily emphasized.

2. A large population of elderly homeowners could indicate an imminent turnover of the housing stock so young buyers should be encouraged. Neighborhood confidence and investor awareness of Roslindale as a viable place to live, raise a family and shop should be stimulated to bring a greater awareness of its assets both within and outside the community. To maintain its identity as a strong neighborhood Roslindale needs to attract young families. Its housing stock is moderately priced and basically well maintained and would provide a good investment for young families who would like to own their own homes and have easy access to both the city and the suburbs. A promotional program for Roslindale should be developed, using City seed money, which highlights the area from an investment standpoint and which reinforces a sense of pride and confidence so that present owners will be encouraged to continue to maintain their residency. This program should be multi-faceted and include (1) a series of conferences with local banks, realtors and community leaders, (2) public information material such as posters or brochures on the positive aspects of Roslindale and (3) media presentations such as newspaper articles and TV news items which again illustrate the neighborhood's quality as a desirable place to live.
3. Roslindale's two public housing projects, Archdale and Washington/Beech, are in need of extensive renovations. The facilities at the Archdale project have been heavily vandalized and maintenance has been inadequate. Washington/ Beech has a proportion of its units reserved for the elderly. As such, these units need specific accommodations designed for the health and well being of elderly citizens. Both projects need major attention and the B.H.A. should be strongly urged to quickly expend modernization funds and provide necessary support so that modernization can actually be achieved at these project locations.
4. The housing conditions in the Southwest Corridor reflect disinvestment and abandonment resulting from the uncertainty of transportation decisions at the State level. A continued effort should be made to restore this area to a stable neighborhood before its blighting effect spreads into neighboring streets. State-owned property should be resold and certain parcels restricted for recreation uses. New construction, where possible, should be encouraged particularly when it provides needed elderly housing. Public Works improvements to street and utility systems should be coordinated to encourage private restoration in this corridor. The conversion of the Weld School into elderly apartments will have a significant impact on the restoration of this neighborhood. A review of existing land uses of DPW-owned property should also be undertaken to determine if some commercial property

should be rezoned for residential use. Extension of the 312 program in this area is strongly recommended. Intensive planning efforts are needed for the Needham Branch extension of the MBTA.

B. ROSLINDALE SQUARE REVITALIZATION

The City has hired the Ryan Elliott Consulting and Appraisal firm to analyze the function and capacity of Roslindale Square to attract new development. The consultant developed a program for implementing the revitalization of Roslindale Square through improved marketing and promotional strategies, major transportation improvements as well as a possible community development corporation for major new development. Recent public expenditures for lighting, parking lots and amenities have stimulated interest in this revitalization; the extensive efforts of Ryan Elliott, will further attract private capital to Roslindale Square. Storefront and interior renovations to existing businesses can be made attractive through a rebate program and assessment schedule. The City will have to employ innovative techniques to effect this revitalization which is necessary to the overall strengthening of Roslindale. Importantly, Community Development money should be allocated for the redesign of South Street to open further development potential.

C. PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS/MAINTENANCE

Several vacant lots along Washington Street should be developed as recreation sites for the lower Washington Street area and improvements made to Healy Field and the non-existent basketball courts in the Archdale Project. Very importantly, the existing recreation facilities need to be regularly maintained and repaired. The success of playgrounds is dependent on a good maintenance program. Items such as broken swings, torn chain link fencing and missing play equipment should be replaced and maintained regularly. The Pagel Playground and adjacent vacant lot should be developed into a modern 6-8 court tennis facility. Property adjacent to the Barron School should be developed into a children's play area and the Cardillo Playground reused for commercial property.

The recently constructed parking lots should also be carefully maintained so that they will not become glass littered lots known only for their extreme vandalism. In addition the Taft Hill Lot should be privately managed through the Roslindale Board of Trade or other local organization to curb vandalism and control illegal parking. The regular enforcement of a 2-hour parking limit for on-street parking in the Square should be actively carried out by police.

Roslindale's street and utility systems should be upgraded on a regular and coordinated basis.

22 D. HUMAN SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

The areas of health care, vocational counseling and teenage and elderly services need to be examined with respect to the changing needs of Roslindale. A thorough evaluation of programs and services available to low income residents, elderly and youth should be undertaken in the immediate future. Programs and funding levels should then be reflective of these findings so that the human services can complement family and individual needs, enabling people to live in Roslindale confident of their well being. The City's Youth Activities Commission can be effective in dealing with teenage problems in Roslindale and should coordinate their programs with the local teen center. There are several social service organizations which deliver elderly services but again are often uncoordinated. Seminars and conferences should be conducted among the various human service agencies to increase communication between them and to assure greater efficiency.

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Roy Bishop, Director, Neighborhood Planning Program

Carole Mathieson, Roslindale Neighborhood Planner

# 4.

ROSLINDALE  
FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1977 Investment Program

ISSUE	STRATEGY	1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	PROPOSED 1978-1980 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
1. Roslindale Square Revitalization	Completion of Roslindale Square Revitalization Program (Ryan-Elliott contract).	Ryan-Elliott/Hilgenhurst contract for Revitalization Program-\$28,000	Review of proposed program for Ryan-Elliott Team.
	Storefront improvements		Storefront Improvement Program
		Footpatrol Program - \$42,000	Continuation of Footpatrol Program
	Private Management systems for public parking lots.		Transfer management of Taft Hill parking lot to Roslindale Board of Trade.
	Identify logo or theme for Roslindale Square.		Development of logo for Square for use in signs, ads, etc.
	Attract private development	Teen Center - \$20,000 Roslindale Health Center - \$174,000	
2. Southwest Corridor	Widen South Street, redesign traffic circulation in Square.		Fund engineering design and construction of South Street, etc.
	Conversion of Weld School to elderly housing developer.	Designations of E. Dennis Walsh as Weld School.	Rehabilitation of Weld School.
	Construct tennis courts at Pagel Playground.		Construction of tennis courts at Pagel Playground.
	Relocate Cardillo Playground to 457-485 Hyde Park Avenue.		Relocation of Cardillo Playground.
	Dismantle existing scrap playground and advertise for commercial re-use of land.		Land-use Study of D.P.W.-owned property.
	Expedite sale of State-owned property.		
3. Housing Rehabilitation	Encourage D.P.W. to undertake bridge renovations on Cummins Highway, Canterbury & Blekemore Streets.		Bridge reconstruction on Canterbury Street.
	Continuation of HIP Program with target areas of Lower Washington Street & Southwest Corridor area.	\$275,000 - H.I.P.	Increase H.I.P. participation to minimum of 30% eligible homes (800 buildings).
	Continue 312 Loan Program	\$250,000 - 312 loans	\$300,000 - 312 Allocation - monitor progress
	Modernization to Archdale & Beech Street Housing Projects	\$213,400 Boiler Repairs \$275,000 Exterior Improvements - Archdale \$ 88,000 Recreational Improvements at Wash./Beech	Direct BHA to expend committed funds before allocating additional modernization monies.
	Increase neighborhood confidence and investor awareness.		Develop promotional program for Roslindale, i.e., brochure, real estate seminar, media presentations.
	Attract young families		
4. Elderly/Housing	Provide additional housing units for elderly citizens through new construction and conversions of older buildings where possible.	Cliffmont Street 119 units elderly housing development (B.H.A.)	Recommend sites for elderly construction. Conversions of Weld School to 14 elderly housing units.
5. Capital Improvements & Public Facilities	Systematic schedule of improvements to street & utility system & recreation area. Regular maintenance program park & recreation sites district wide.	Cliffmont & Canterbury traffic signal, sidewalk & street improvements (\$130,000) Fallon Field-\$125,000 Tennis court construction.	Develop new recreation facility at 3849 & 4040 Washington Street.
6. Transit Development: Needham Branch	Expedite completion of MBTA's Environmental Impact Statement on Orange Line Extension. Analyze transit development options.		Review C.E. Maguire's Impact Statement Southwest Corridor Management Program.

